

## 4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

This section contains a discussion of the possible environmental effects of the proposed Grading and Stormwater Management Ordinances for the specific issue areas that were identified as having the potential to experience significant impacts.

“Significant effect” is defined by the State CEQA Guidelines §15382 as “a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance. An economic or social change by itself shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment, but may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant.”

The assessment of each issue area begins with the setting. This is followed by the impact analysis. Within the impact analysis, the first subsection identifies the methodologies used and the “significance thresholds.” Significance thresholds are those criteria adopted by the County or other agencies, which are universally recognized, or are developed specifically for this analysis to determine whether potential effects are significant. The next subsection describes each impact of the proposed project, mitigation measures for significant impacts, and the level of significance after mitigation. Each effect under consideration for an issue area is separately listed in bold text, with the discussion of the effect and its significance following. Each bolded impact listing also contains a statement of the significance determination for the environmental impact, as follows:

*Class I. Significant and Unavoidable: An impact that cannot be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures. Such an impact requires a Statement of Overriding Considerations to be issued if the project is approved per §15093 of the State CEQA Guidelines.*

*Class II. Significant but Mitigable: An impact that can be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures. Such an impact requires findings to be made under §15091 of the State CEQA Guidelines.*

*Class III. Less than Significant: An impact that may be adverse, but does not exceed the threshold levels and does not require mitigation measures. However, mitigation measures that could further lessen the environmental effect may be suggested if readily available and easily achievable.*

*Class IV. Beneficial: An effect that would reduce existing environmental problems or hazards.*

Following each environmental impact discussion is a list of recommended mitigation measures (if required) and the residual effects or level of significance remaining after the implementation of the measures. In those cases where the mitigation measure for an impact could have a significant environmental impact in another issue area, this impact is discussed as a residual effect. The impact analysis concludes with a discussion of cumulative effects, which evaluates the impacts associated with the proposed project in conjunction with other future development in the area. A discussion of effects found to be less than significant is found in Section 4.11 of the EIR.



## **Methodology for Assessing Impacts**

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that a “project” be evaluated based on its change from existing conditions. A project’s baseline is normally comprised of the existing environmental setting, not what is hypothetically allowed pursuant to existing zoning or permitted plans.

In evaluating potential environmental impacts, the Environmental Impact Report is to consider any changes to the existing environmental conditions. However, this consideration does not extend to pre-existing policies that are re-adopted without change. *Black property owners v. City of Berkeley* (22 Cal. App. 4<sup>th</sup> 974). Therefore, this Environmental Impact Report will consider the changes that are proposed as part of this amendment package, in relation to the existing physical environmental conditions. This Environmental Impact Report does not consider the environmental effects of the proposed amendment package in relation to the environmental effects that could occur from the existing ordinance and general plan requirements. This evaluation is consistent with the requirements outlined in *Environmental Planning and Information Council v. The County of El Dorado* (131 Cal. App. 3d 350).

## **Irreversible Environmental Effects**

Public Resources Code Sections 21100(b)(2) and 21100.1(a) require that EIRs prepared for the adoption of plan, policy, or ordinance of a public agency must include a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes as:

*Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. In addition, irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.*

Implementation of the proposed Grading and Stormwater Management Ordinances would result in greater protection and conservation of resources than plan, programs and policies currently adopted by the County. Therefore the proposed project is not anticipated to have significant irreversible environmental changes.

## **Significant and Unavoidable Environmental Effects**

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(b) requires an EIR to discuss unavoidable significant environmental effects, including those that can be mitigated, but not to a level of insignificance. Section 15093(a) of the CEQA Guidelines allows a decision-making agency, in approving a project, to determine that the benefits of a proposed project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental impacts of implementing the project. However, the County can approve a project with unavoidable significant adverse impacts if it prepares a “Statement of Overriding Considerations” setting forth the specific reasons for making such a judgment, and makes other findings required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15091.



Significant and unavoidable impacts were identified in the following issue areas:

- Agricultural Resources – refer to Section 4.1
- Water Resources – refer to Section 4.11

The reader is further referred to Sections 4.1 through 4.12 for complete details and analysis of environmental impacts.



## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

- 4.1 Agricultural Resources
- 4.2 Air Quality
- 4.3 Biological Resources
- 4.4 Cultural Resources
- 4.5 Hydrology and Water Quality
- 4.6 Geologic Resources
- 4.7 Noise
- 4.8 Public Services
- 4.9 Transportation and Circulation
- 4.10 Visual Resources
- 4.11 Water Resources
- 4.12 Effects Found Not to be Significant

